

Taldryan Proconsul Justinios Drake looked around his restaurant and was pleased to see that everyone he had invited seemed to be present and accounted for. At his own table, situated as the back of the restaurant facing out towards the other guests, were his closest allies. The Taldryan Lieutenant Liya Oldag sat to his right and the Mandalorian mercenary Tavens Caedo sat to his left. The rest of the head table was made up of the top commanders and ship captains across the Taldryan armed forces. Spread out at the other table were mid-level officers across the entirety of the clans army and navy. Now that their individual meal orders had been made it was time for the Aleena to make his speech.

“Dear friends, I know I have not shared much about the reason behind this dinner and it pains me to announce that one of the reasons I have brought you all here is because I fear that war is upon us once again.” Seeing as everyone in the room was a career soldier of some sort, it came as no surprise to Justinios that none of those present let any of their own shock show. “Activity on the Inquisitorius network has increased ten-fold in the last few weeks, the Shroud Syndicate seems to have been working overtime in acquiring war materiel alongside the Arx Capital Exchange and the Grand Master’s Royal Guard has been working on extra fortifications around the Dark Councilors. This increase in activity, along with the recent discovery of the Severian Principate, indicates to me that we should be preparing for conflict in some form or another.”

“So then why the hell are we all here, in one unsecured location, if you are expecting an attack?” Even though the Mandalorian had only started to work with Justinios, the mercenary was never afraid to speak his mind.

“To answer your first part of your question,” the Aleena responded, “I don’t expect any kind of attack on Caelus itself. But more specifically we are here for mental health reasons. If we all ride to war we’ll be eating military rations and drinking only whatever fine beverages that we can salvage from the battlefield.” Justinios then turned his gaze out to the crowd, who were all watching the exchange closely. “My friends, I want you all to know how much I personally appreciate all that you do to protect your those under your command. The truth is that we don’t always have the choice on if we will fight but we can choose to watch out for each other so that as many of us as possible can safely return to our new home. A toast to you!”

Justinios raised his glass of Corellian wine and the assembled officers all followed suit with a hearty cheer. Their tables each had multiple bottles of different types of wine on them and the wait staff were instructed to keep them supplied for as long as the cellar had bottles left in it.

Lieutenant Oldag leaned in and whispered into Justinios’ ear as the crowd continued to cheer and began a round of toasts of their own. “Did you put Tavens up to that or did you just bet on him questioning you in front of everyone?”

Justinios smirked back at her, flashing his reptilian teeth. “Definitely the latter,” he replied right before downing his entire glass of Corellian wine. “Enough scheming. Enjoy the event, the appetizers should be... ah yes here come the Mon Calamari oysters now.”